

PTO/SB/20 (05-06)

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U.S. Patent and Trademark Office; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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**REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PATENT PROSECUTION HIGHWAY (PPH) PILOT PROGRAM BETWEEN THE JPO AND THE USPTO**

Application No.:	10/795,943	First Named Inventor:	Atsushi MATSUMOTO
Filing Date:	March 8, 2004	Attorney Docket No.:	CANO:127
Title of the Invention:	IMAGE READING APPARATUS		

**THIS REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PPH PILOT PROGRAM MUST BE FAXED TO:**  
**THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS AT 571-273-0125 DIRECTED TO THE ATTENTION OF MAGDALEN GREENLIEF**

**APPLICANT HEREBY REQUESTS PARTICIPATION IN THE PATENT PROSECUTION HIGHWAY (PPH) PILOT PROGRAM AND PETITIONS TO MAKE THE ABOVE-IDENTIFIED APPLICATION SPECIAL UNDER THE PPH PILOT PROGRAM.**

The above-identified application validly claims priority under 35 U.S.C. 119(a) and 37 CFR 1.55 to one or more corresponding JPO application(s).

The JPO application number(s) is/are: JP 2003-064998

The filing date of the JPO application(s) is/are: March 11, 2003

**I. List of Required Documents:**

- a. A copy of all JPO office actions (including "Decision to Grant a Patent") in the above-identified JPO application(s).**

☒ Is attached.

☐ Is available via Dossier Access System. Applicant hereby requests that the USPTO obtain these documents via the Dossier Access System.

- b. A copy of all claims which were determined to be patentable by the JPO in the above-identified JPO application(s).**

☒ Is attached.

☐ Is available via Dossier Access System. Applicant hereby requests that the USPTO obtain these documents via the Dossier Access System.

- c. English translations of the documents in a. and b. above along with a statement that the English translations are accurate are attached.**

- d. Information disclosure statement listing the documents cited in the JPO office actions is attached.**

Copies of all documents are attached except for U.S. patents or U.S. patent application publications.

No references cited in JPO.

This collection of information is required by 35 U.S.C. 119, 37 CFR 1.55, and 37 CFR 1.102(d). The information is required to obtain or retain a benefit by the public, which is to file (and by the USPTO to process) an application. Confidentiality is governed by 35 U.S.C. 122 and 37 CFR 1.11 and 1.14. This collection is estimated to take 2 hours to complete, including gathering, preparing, and submitting the completed application form to the USPTO. Time will vary depending upon the individual case. Any comments on the amount of time you require to complete this form and/or suggestions for reducing this burden should be sent to the Chief Information Officer, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, U.S. Department of Commerce, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450. DO NOT SEND FEES OR COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. FAX COMPLETED FORMS TO: Office of the Commissioner for Patents at 571-273-0125, Attention: Magdalen Greenlief.

**REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PATENT PROSECUTION HIGHWAY (PPH) PILOT PROGRAM  
BETWEEN THE JPO AND THE USPTO**

(continued)

Application No.:	10/795,943	First Named Inventor:	Atsushi MATSUMOTO
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**II. Claims Correspondence Table:**

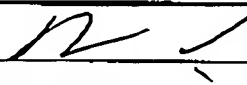
Claims in US Application	Patentable Claims in JP Application	Explanation regarding the correspondence
10	1	Both claims are the same except the claim format
11	2	Both claims are the same
12	3	Both claims are the same except the claim format
13	4	Both claims are the same except the claim format
14	5	Both claims are the same except the claim format
15	6	Both claims are the same
16	7	Both claims are the same
17	8	Both claims are the same
	9	Deleted

  
**III. All the claims in the US application sufficiently correspond to the patentable/allowable claims in the JPO application.**
  
**IV. Payment of Fees:**

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the petition fee under 37 CFR 1.17(h) as required by 37 CFR 1.102(d) to ☒ Deposit Account No. 18-2056.

☐ Credit Card. Credit Card Payment Form (PTO-2038) is attached.

Signature 	Date <u>11-27-06</u>
Name (Print/Typed) Marc A. Rossi	Registration Number 31,923

## PATENT

## IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of:

Atsushi MATSUMOTO

Serial No.: 10/795,943

Filed: 8 March 2004

Title: IMAGE READING APPARATUS

Group Art Unit: 2624

Examiner: MEHTA, BHAVESH M

Attorney Docket No.: CANO:127

Confirmation No. 1350

Certificate of Filing By Facsimile

I hereby certify that this paper is being transmitted via facsimile to the United States Patent & Trademark Office, to the attention of Magdalen Greenlief at telephone number 571-273-0125, on:

DATE: 11-27-06BY: MARC A. ROSSI

MARC A. ROSSI

**ATTN: Magdalen Greenlief**

COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS

P.O. Box 1450

ALEXANDRIA, VA 22313-1450

## FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

Total Pages 85 (including this page)

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COVER SHEET 1

Doc. 7-2  
Decision to Grant a Patent

Reference No. 253141      Dispatch No. 286546  
                                 Dispatch Date: August 2, 2005  
**Decision to Grant a Patent**

Patent Application No.	2003-064998
Drafting Date	July 29, 2005
JPO Examiner	Tsutomu WATANABE      8948 5V00
Title of the Invention	IMAGE READING APPARATUS, DATA INTERPOLATION METHOD, AND CONTROL PROGRAM
Number of Claims	9
Applicant	CANON KABUSHIKI KAISHA
Agent	Toshihiko WATANABE

This patent application is to be granted a patent,  
since no reason for refusal has been found.

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I certify that matters described above are identical with  
those recorded on the file.

Date of certification: August 1, 2005

Administrative Official of Ministry of Economy, Trade and  
Industry: Emiko HIRASE

Remark: It is necessary to pay the annual fee within 30 days  
from the date of receipt of this document.

Doc 7 20050802  
Decision of Grant

整理番号:253141 発送番号:286546 発送日:平成17年 8月 2日 1/E

**特許査定**

特許出願の番号	特願2003-064998
起案日	平成17年 7月29日
特許庁審査官	渡辺 努 8948 5V00
発明の名称	画像読み取り装置、データ補間方法及び制御プログラム
請求項の数	9
特許出願人	キヤノン株式会社
代理人	渡部 敏彦

この出願については、拒絶の理由を発見しないから、特許査定する。

---

上記はファイルに記録されている事項と相違ないことを認証する。

認証日 平成17年 8月 1日 経済産業事務官 平瀬 恵美子

注意：この書面を受け取った日から30日以内に特許料の納付が必要です。

Doc 2-2  
Final claims

Japanese Patent No. 3710452

[Claims]

[Claim 1]

An image reading apparatus comprising image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel; and pixel interpolation means for compensating for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data,

said pixel interpolation means comprising degree-of-flatness detecting means for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; filter-size selecting means for selecting a filter size according to a result of detection provided by said degree-of-flatness detecting means; and interpolation-data computing means for computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Claim 2]

An image reading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said image reading means is composed of a plurality of image sensors arranged in a row at predetermined intervals, and the target pixel is a pixel corresponding to a space between adjacent image sensors.

[Claim 3]

An image reading apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said interpolation-data computing means includes a plurality of filters having respective different filter sizes.

[Claim 4]

An image reading apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said filter size is based on the number of pixels that said interpolation-data computing means makes reference to when computing the interpolation data.

[Claim 5]

An image reading apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means detects the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel.

[Claim 6]

An image reading apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means computes a maximum value and a minimum value of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel, and determines that the degree of flatness is high, if a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value is not greater than a predetermined threshold value.

[Claim 7]

An image reading apparatus according to claim 5,

wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means detects the degree of flatness of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel.

[Claim 8]

A data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, said data interpolation method comprising:

detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; selecting a filter size according to a result of detection of the degree of flatness; and computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Claim 9]

A control program for allowing a computer to execute a data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, the method comprising:

a step of detecting the degree of flatness of a



plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel;

a step of selecting a filter size according to a result of detection of the degree of flatness; and

a step of computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.



Doc 8 Statement

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re PATENT APPLICATION of  
Inventor: Atsushi MATSUMOTO  
Application No. 10/795,943  
Title: IMAGE READING APPARATUS

**VERIFIED TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS CONCERNING JAPANESE PATENT APPLICATION**

The undersigned, of the below address, hereby certifies that he/she well knows both the English and Japanese Languages, and that the attached are accurate translations of the documents listed below concerning Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-064998:

Notification of Reason for Refusal  
Argument  
Amendments  
Decision to Grant a Patent  
Final Claims

Signed this ninth day of November, 2006

Signature: Tomomi Nishikawa  
Name: Tomomi NISHIKAWA  
Address: 3-16-5-202, Ohsaki, Shinagawa-ku,  
Tokyo, 141-0032 Japan

Doc 3-2  
040413 Amendment

[Name of Document] Amendment  
[Reference No.] 253141  
[Date of Submission] April 13, 2005  
[Destination] Commissioner of the Patent Office  
[Description of the Case]  
[Application No.] Patent Application No. 2003-64998  
[Applicant]  
[Id. No.] 000001007  
[Name] CANON KABUSHIKI KAISHA  
[Agent]  
[Id. No.] 100081880  
[Patent Attorney]  
[Name] Toshihiko WATANABE  
[Phone No.] 03-3580-8464  
[Number of Claims Increased by Amendment] 8  
[Amendment 1]  
[Name of Document to be Amended] Specification  
[Name of Item to be Amended] All  
[Manner of Amendment] Change  
[Content of Amendment]  
[Name of Document] SPECIFICATION  
[Title of the Invention] IMAGE READING APPARATUS, DATA  
INTERPOLATION METHOD, AND CONTROL PROGRAM  
[Claims]  
[Claim 1] An image reading apparatus comprising image

reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel; and pixel interpolation means for compensating for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data,

said pixel interpolation means comprising degree-of-flatness detecting means for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; filter-size selecting means for selecting a filter size according to a result of detection provided by said degree-of-flatness detecting means; and interpolation-data computing means for computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the defective pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Claim 2] An image reading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said image reading means is composed of a plurality of image sensors arranged in a row at predetermined intervals, and the target pixel is a pixel corresponding to a space between adjacent image sensors.

[Claim 3] An image reading apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said interpolation-data computing means includes a plurality of filters having respective different filter sizes.

[Claim 4] An image reading apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said filter size is based on the

number of pixels that said interpolation-data computing means makes reference to when computing the interpolation data.

[Claim 5] An image reading apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means detects the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel.

[Claim 6] An image reading apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means computes a maximum value and a minimum value of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel, and determines that the degree of flatness is high, if a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value is not greater than a predetermined threshold value.

[Claim 7] An image reading apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-correlation detecting means detects the degree of flatness of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel.

[Claim 8] A data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, said data interpolation method comprising:

detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of

pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel;  
selecting a filter size according to a result of detection  
of the degree of flatness; and computing the interpolation  
data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of  
pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel  
according to the filter size selected.

[Claim 9] A control program for allowing a computer to  
execute a data interpolation method for an image reading  
apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on  
an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for  
pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through  
interpolation with interpolation data, the method  
comprising:

a step of detecting the degree of flatness of a  
plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the  
target pixel;

a step of selecting a filter size according to a result  
of detection of the degree of flatness; and

a step of computing the interpolation data by  
performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel  
data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according  
to the filter size selected.

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[Technical Field of the Invention]

The present invention relates to image reading apparatuses, such as an image scanner, a facsimile machine and a copying machine, and to data interpolation methods and control programs for the image reading apparatuses.

[0002]

[Description of the Related Art]

Heretofore, there has been known an image reading apparatus for reading an image on an original to produce a digital signal for each pixel. More specifically, the image reading apparatus is provided with a plurality of image reading sensors each having a one-dimensional array of pixels, and the plurality of image reading sensors are arranged in a row in the direction of the array of pixels so as to cover the required image reading range and are configured to read an image on an original while moving in the direction perpendicular to the direction of the array of pixels, thereby producing a two-dimensional digital signal.

[0003]

However, in such a type of image reading apparatus, as the reading resolution becomes higher, it becomes difficult to accurately set the distance in a joint portion between each pair of adjacent image reading sensors of the plurality of image reading sensors to a distance approximately equivalent to one pixel. If the distance in a joint portion between adjacent image reading sensors is large, when an



image on an original having periodicity, such as a halftone-dotted image in print, is read, missing data occurs at a part of image data read corresponding to the position of the joint portion between adjacent image reading sensors, so that streak-like noises would be unfavorably generated, thereby causing deterioration of image quality.

[0004]

In order to compensate for such missing data in the joint portion between adjacent image reading sensors through interpolation, there is proposed a method of performing one-dimensional filtering computation (for example, see Patent Document 1). In the proposed method, such filtering computation is performed at all elements of image data whether in interpolation positions or not. Then, a difference between a result of filtering computation and actual data (luminance value) in an arbitrary data position other than any interpolation position is obtained, and the result of filtering computation that has been found to be nearest the actual data is selected as a result of filtering computation in an interpolation position.

[0005]

[Patent Document 1] Japanese Patent Laid-Open No.  
2003-8853

[0006]

[Problems to be Solved by the Invention]

However, in the aforementioned related art (for example, Patent Document 1), since a comparison is made between each of a plurality of results of filtering computation and the associated actual luminance value in all pixels except joint portions of image reading sensors, a complicated processing operation is required. Also, in order to perform high-precision interpolation, it is necessary to increase the number of pieces of reference data. Therefore, the above-mentioned proposed method has limitations from the viewpoint of simply and precisely compensating for missing data in joint portions of image reading sensors through interpolation so as to obtain a high-quality image.

[0007]

In order to solve the aforementioned problem in the related art, it is an object of the present invention to provide an image reading apparatus, in which a plurality of image reading sensors are joined with one another, and which is capable of simply and precisely compensating for defective data in joint portions of the plurality of image reading sensors through interpolation so as to obtain a high-quality image, and to provide a data interpolation method and a control program for the image reading apparatus.

[0008]

[Means for Solving the Problems]

To attain the above object, an image reading apparatus

as set forth in claim 1 is an image reading apparatus including image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel; and pixel interpolation means for compensating for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data. The pixel interpolation means includes degree-of-flatness detecting means for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; filter-size selecting means for selecting a filter size according to a result of detection provided by the degree-of-flatness detecting means; and interpolation-data computing means for computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the defective pixel according to the filter size selected.

[0009]

A data interpolation method as set forth in claim 8 is a data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data. The data interpolation method includes detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; selecting a filter size according to a result of detection

of the degree of flatness; and computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[0010]

A control program as set forth in claim 9 is a control program for allowing a computer to execute a data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data. The method includes a step of detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; a step of selecting a filter size according to a result of detection of the degree of flatness; and a step of computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[0011]

[Description of the Embodiments]

Hereinafter, embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the drawings.

[0012]

[First Embodiment]

<Outline Arrangement of Image Reading Apparatus>

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of an interpolation computing portion provided in an image reading apparatus (scanner) according to a first embodiment of the invention, and Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the appearance of the image reading apparatus according to the first embodiment.

[0013]

Referring first to Fig. 2, in the scanner, which is the image reading apparatus according to the first embodiment, an image on a sheet of paper, which serves as an original, is illuminated and is then scanned by a one-line image reading sensor (see Fig. 3) so as to be converted into an electrical signal as raster image data. When the user of the apparatus sets the original on an original-placing board glass of the scanner and operates an operation portion (not shown) to give an instruction for reading, the scanner reads the original to convert an image thereon into an electrical signal. Alternatively, when the user of the apparatus sets sheets of paper on a tray 202 of a document feeder 201 and operates the operation portion to give an instruction for reading, the document feeder 201 feeds the sheets of paper one by one to enable the scanner to read an image on each original.

[0014]

<Details of Image Reading Sensor>

Figs. 3(a) and (b) are diagrams for illustrating the operation of the image reading sensor according to the first embodiment. Fig. 3(a) shows an original-placing board glass 30 and a one-line image reading sensor 31, and Fig. 3(b) shows an enlarged view of the one-line image reading sensor.

[0015]

Referring to Fig. 3(a), when the user of the apparatus sets an original on the original-placing board glass 30 in such a manner that an image to be read points downward, the original is illuminated by illumination means, and light reflected from the original passes through a lens (SELFOC (trademark) lens array or the like) to form an optical image on the one-line image reading sensor 31. The one-line image reading sensor 31 converts the optical image into an analog electrical signal, which is then converted into digital image data by an A/D converter (not shown). Since the one-line image reading sensor 31 has photoelectric conversion devices, such as CCD devices, to generate image data in the main-scanning direction, the scanner transports the one-line image reading apparatus 31 in the direction perpendicular to the main-scanning direction (in the sub-scanning direction) to generate two-dimensional image data.

[0016]

The one-line image reading sensor 31 is composed of a

plurality of small image sensors 31-1 to 31-10 so as to supply a required number of main-scanning pixels. Assuming that an image 300 mm wide is read at the resolution of 600 dpi, the required number of main-scanning pixels becomes:

$$300 \text{ mm} / (25.4 / 600) = \text{about } 7100 \text{ pixels,}$$

$$\text{where } 1 \text{ inch} = 25.4 \text{ mm.}$$

Each of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-10 is composed of 710 pixels, so that tens of "710 pixels" constitute "7100 pixels". Since the reading resolution is assumed to be 600 dpi, the distance (length) of one pixel is as follows:

$$1 / 600 \text{ inch} = 25.4 / 600 \text{ mm} = \text{about } 0.0423 \text{ mm.}$$

Accordingly, the distance "A" shown in Fig. 3(b) is about 0.0423 mm in the case of the first embodiment.

[0017]

If the interval between the last pixel L of each of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-9 and the first pixel F of the next image sensor is made to be about 0.0423 mm, no problems would arise. However, in terms of the structural arrangement of image sensor chips, it may be very difficult or physically impossible to set such an interval, and a larger interval might be required. In the case of the first embodiment, the interval between image sensor chips is made to be "2A", which is twice as large as the distance "A", so that the packaging of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-10 can be facilitated.

[0018]

However, since the interval between the pixel L and the pixel F is larger than the interval between adjacent pixels disposed in one image sensor, as shown in Fig. 3(b), joint portions of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-10 would be conspicuous. Therefore, in the first embodiment, image data corresponding to a pixel H, which is situated between the pixel L and the pixel F and is unreadable, is computed by an interpolation computing portion, which will be described below, and is used to make the joint portions of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-10 not conspicuous.

[0019]

Since the pixel H, which is to be subjected to interpolation, exists in each of the joint portions of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-10, in the first embodiment, it becomes necessary to make the interpolation computing portion perform a computing operation at nine points in total, i.e., from a pixel H1 between the first image sensor and the second image sensor to a pixel H9 between the ninth image sensor and the tenth image sensor.

[0020]

<Details of Interpolation Computing Portion>

Referring to Fig. 1, the interpolation computing portion is composed of image input means 101, selection signal generating means 102, first filter means 103, second



filter means 104 and selector means 105.

[0021]

When image data is inputted from the image input means 101, the first filter means 103, which is suited for interpolation for image data having periodicity, and the second filter means 104, which performs interpolation for image data unsuitable for the first filter means 103, perform the respective convolution computing operations to produce filtering-processed image signals. The selection signal generating means 102 determines whether the inputted image data is image data suited for the first filter means 103 and generates and outputs a selection signal SL.

[0022]

The selector means 105 is arranged to receive three image signals, i.e., the respective filtering-processed image signals produced by the first and second filter means 103 and 104 and a target pixel signal TG1, and target-pixel position information TG2. Then, when the target-pixel position information TG2 does not indicate any position requiring interpolation, the selector means 105 outputs the target pixel signal TG1 as it stands. On the other hand, when the target-pixel position information TG2 indicates a position requiring interpolation, i.e., the position of each of the pixels H1 to H9, the selector means 105 selects and outputs one of the filtering-processed image signal produced

by the first filter means 103 and the filtering-processed image signal produced by the second filter means 104 according to the selection signal SL.

[0023]

In the following, the processing operation of the interpolation computing portion will be described more specifically.

[0024]

Image data as read by the one-line image reading sensor 31 is inputted from the image input means 101. In the case of the first embodiment, data for the target pixel and five pixels situated on each of the right and left sides thereof, i.e., data for eleven pixels in total, are inputted. It is now assumed that each pixel corresponds to an 8-bit multivalued luminance signal of level "0" to "255". The target pixel is arranged to shift serially by one pixel. If the target pixel is the sixth pixel, image data for the first to eleventh pixels are supplied and processed, and, when the processing operation on the sixth pixel serving as the target pixel has been completed, the target pixel is shifted to the seventh pixel, so that image data for the second to twelfth pixels are supplied, thereby enabling the processing operation for the number of main-scanning pixels to be continued. Further, when the processing operation for the entire number of main-scanning pixels has been completed,

the reading operation advances by one line in the sub-scanning direction to continue the processing operation in the similar way as much as the number of sub-scanning reading lines, then coming to an end.

[0025]

It should be noted that the number "11" of pixels of supplied image data is a value determined according to the size of filters. If the target pixel is situated at an end portion of the image, there is a probability that image data for eleven pixels can not be supplied. In that event, pixel data as inputted should be outputted as they are without being processed.

[0026]

Here, while image data to be inputted from the one-line image reading sensor 31 are those for  $710 \times 10 = 7100$  pixels in the main-scanning direction, it is considered that, for the purpose of simplifying the processing operation, each of the above-mentioned interpolation pixels H1 to H9 is inserted, as dummy data, in between the last pixel L of each of the image sensors 31-1 to 31-9 and the first pixel F of the next image sensor. Since data for each of the interpolation pixels H1 to H9 is outputted after being finally subjected to the interpolation computing operation, the dummy data may be set to any value. It is here assumed that "0" is inputted as the dummy data.

[0027]

It would be seen from the foregoing that the first pixel to the 710-th pixel correspond to pixel data generated by the first image sensor 31-1, the 711-th pixel corresponds to "H1" (dummy data), the 712-th pixel to the 1421-st pixel correspond to pixel data generated by the second image sensor 31-2, and the 1422-nd pixel corresponds to "H2" (dummy data). The subsequent pixels correspond to image data generated and inputted in the same way. Accordingly, image data to be inputted are considered to be image data for 7109 pixels in total, "7109" being obtained by adding the number "9" of defective pixels to the number "7100" of main-scanning pixels. The position of each of the pixels H1 to H9, which are required to be subjected to interpolation, becomes:

(the number "710" of pixels of each image sensor + 1)  
× N-th pixel,  
where N is an integral number.

[0028]

While it has been mentioned that the required number of main-scanning pixels is "7100", even if the one-line image reading sensor is arranged to be able to read a wider range than the required range, image data for pixels situated outside the required range may be neglected without being used, so that no serious problems would arise.

[0029]

Image data inputted from the image input means 101 is supplied to the first filter means 103. The image data as inputted is image data for the target pixel and five pixels situated on each of the right and left sides in the vicinity of the target pixel, i.e., image data for eleven pixels, and a convolution computing operation is performed with the use of the image data for eleven pixels. The processing operation of the first filter means 103 is required for performing an effective interpolation computing operation on image data having periodicity, as mentioned above.

[0030]

Here, one example of filter coefficients for eleven pixels will be mentioned as follows:

[0031]

23, -49, 75, -98, 113, 0, 113, -98, 75, -49, 23.

In the filter coefficients for eleven pixels, coefficient "0" situated at the center is used for the target pixel. In each of the pixels H1 to H9, which are required to be subjected to interpolation, there is previously set dummy data, which is made "0" so as not to have an influence on the convolution computing operation. Therefore, the convolution computing operation is performed with ten pixels other than the target pixel. With the above coefficients used, image data for each pixel is multiplied

by the coefficient corresponding to the position of the individual pixel. For example, such a computing operation is performed that the leftmost coefficient "23" is multiplied by image data for the fifth pixel as counted to the left from the target pixel, and the second coefficient "-49" as counted from the far left is multiplied by image data for the fourth pixel as counted to the left from the target pixel.

[0032]

The first filter means 103 is arranged to compute a value obtained by dividing by "128" the summation of results of such multiplications for ten pixels. The number "128" is a normalization number for the filter coefficients. If it is intended to obtain the same frequency response, the filter coefficients will vary according to the normalization number. It is desirable that the normalization number is the power of "2" for the purpose of hardware processing or high-speed software processing. In the case of the first embodiment, the normalization number is tentatively set to "128".

[0033]

Fig. 4 is a graph showing the spatial frequency response of the above-mentioned coefficients to be used in the first filter means 103, in which the abscissa axis represents a spatial frequency (lp/mm) and the ordinate axis

represents a gain.

[0034]

In the first embodiment, since the reading resolution is 600 dpi, the graph of Fig. 4 illustrates up to the spatial frequency of 300 dpi = about 12 [lp/mm]. The gain becomes almost "1" when the spatial frequency is in the range of 0 [lp/mm] to 8 [lp/mm]. This implies that it is possible to almost adequately perform an interpolation process with respect to an image having a spatial frequency of up to 8 [lp/mm]. In other words, even if halftone dots having high periodicity, such as print, exist in an image on an original, it is possible to adequately compute an interpolation pixel from neighboring pixels through interpolation if the image has a spatial frequency of up to 8 [lp/mm] = about 200 lines. Accordingly, it is possible to prevent the joint portions H1 to H9 from becoming conspicuous.

[0035]

It would also be seen that, as the spatial frequency becomes higher, the gain becomes minus while increasing in absolute value. This implies that, with respect to an image having a higher frequency component, the amplitude of image data is reversed from that of the image on an original and becomes large unnaturally. However, since any image on originals rarely has a spatial frequency of more than 200

lines at present, no serious problems would arise.

[0036]

Image data inputted from the image input means 101 is also supplied to the second filter means 104. As inputted data, data for the target pixel and data for right and left pixels adjacent to the target pixel, i.e., data for three pixels in total, are selected, and a convolution computing operation is performed with the use of the data for three pixels. The processing operation of the second filter means 104 is required for performing an effective interpolation computing operation on image data that is unsuitable for the processing operation of the first filter means 103. Further, since the second filter means 104 is intended for an image having no periodicity, it is possible to configure the second filter means 104 in a filter size smaller than the size of the first filter means 103.

[0037]

One example of filter coefficients for three pixels will be mentioned as follows:

[0038]

64, 0, 64.

In the filter coefficients for three pixels, the coefficient situated at the center is used for the target pixel and is "0". In each of the pixels H1 to H9, which are required to be subjected to interpolation, there is



previously set dummy data, which is made "0" so as not to have an influence on the convolution computing operation. Therefore, the convolution computing operation is performed with two pixels other than the target pixel. Further, like the first filter means 103, the normalization number is "128", and the processing operation of the second filter means 104 is performed with a result of the convolution computing operation divided by "128". Here, while the normalization number is set to "128", such a simple circuit arrangement may be employed that the normalization number is set to "2" and the coefficient for each of the right and left pixels is set to "1" and the coefficient for the target pixel is set to "0". Although, in the first embodiment, the normalization number in the second filter means 104 is made the same as in the first filter means 103, it is unnecessary to employ the same normalization number.

[0039]

The image input means 101 supplies image data also to the selection signal generating means 102. The selection signal generating means 102 determines whether the image data as inputted is data of an image having no periodicity, which is unsuitable for the processing operation of the first filter means 103. When having determined that the image data as inputted is data of an image suitable for the processing operation of the first filter means 103, the

selection signal generating means 102 outputs a selection signal SL at "1", and when having determined that the image data as inputted is data of an image unsuitable for the processing operation of the first filter means 103, the selection signal generating means 102 outputs the selection signal at "0". The selection signal SL is supplied to the selector means 105.

[0040]

<Details of Selection Signal Generating Means 102>

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing the internal arrangement of the selection signal generating means 102.

[0041]

Referring to Fig. 5, reference numeral 801 represents left flatness detecting means, and reference numeral 802 represents right flatness detecting means. Reference numeral 803 represents AND processing means. Each of the left flatness detecting means 801 and the right flatness detecting means 802 outputs a signal at "0" when having determined that the luminance level of image data is flat, and outputs a signal at "1" when having determined that the luminance level of image data is not flat. Thus, when it has been determined by the left flatness detecting means 801 and the right flatness detecting means 802 that neither of the luminance levels of image data on the right and left sides of the target pixel is flat, the AND processing means

803 outputs a signal at "1" to produce the selection signal SL indicating that a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103 is to be used. When it has been determined that at least one of the luminance levels of image data on the right and left sides of the target pixel is flat, the AND processing means 803 outputs a signal at "0" to produce the selection signal SL indicating that a result of processing provided by the second filter means 104 is to be used.

[0042]

Fig. 6 is a graph showing an example of image that is not suited for a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103.

[0043]

In the graph of Fig. 6, the abscissa axis represents a pixel, and the ordinate axis represents the luminance level, thereby illustrating the distribution of luminance levels in the main-scanning direction. When the luminance level is high, it indicates a bright pixel, and when the luminance level is low, it indicates a dark pixel. The target pixel is situated in the position "5" (marked with \*) as shown in Fig. 7 (numbers "0" to "10" being assigned to pixels from the left to the right), which illustrates image data supplied to the first filter means 103. If image data of such a target pixel is processed by the first filter means

103, it would result in a darker pixel than the surrounding pixels. If such a darker pixel continues for several lines in the sub-scanning direction, the joint portions would become conspicuous.

[0044]

It would be seen from the graph of Fig. 6 that the example of image represents an image having no periodicity, in which pixels situated on the left side of the target pixel are bright and pixels situated on the right side of the target pixel are dark. Such a distribution occurs where the pixels situated on the left side of the target pixel correspond to a sheet surface and the pixels situated on the right side of the target pixel correspond to characters. As mentioned in the foregoing, if such a condition continues over several lines in the sub-scanning direction, a dark linear noise would be caused at a portion corresponding to a part of the sheet surface adjacent to the character portion. In that event, using the processing operation of the second filter means 104 makes it possible to perform an adequate interpolation processing operation. In other words, a mean value between data for the pixel situated in the position "4" and data for the pixel situated in the position "6" is used as interpolation pixel data, so that any extremely-dark and conspicuous noise as represented in Fig. 6 can be prevented.

[0045]

Thus, in cases where the inputted image data has been determined to be data of an image having no periodicity and unsuitable for the processing operation of the first filter means 103, i.e., data having a distribution of luminance levels unsuitable for the processing operation of the first filter means 103, a result of the processing operation of the second filter means 104 is made to be used, so that each joint portion can be prevented from becoming conspicuous.

[0046]

The left flatness detecting operation is performed as described below.

[0047]

First, the left flatness detecting means 801 computes a maximum value MAX and a minimum value MIN from among four pixels (pixels "1", "2", "3" and "4" shown in Fig. 7). If a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value ( $MAX - MIN$ ) is not greater than a predetermined threshold value (TH0), the left flatness detecting means 801 determines the inputted image data to be data of a flat-luminance image and then outputs a signal at "0". If a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value ( $MAX - MIN$ ) is greater than the predetermined threshold value (TH0), the left flatness detecting means 801 determines the inputted image data to be data of a non-flat-

luminance image and then outputs a signal at "1".

[0048]

If the inputted image data is data of an image having periodicity and having amplitude greater than a given value, it is supposed that a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value (MAX - MIN) in the four pixels becomes a great value. To judge this supposition, the above-mentioned computing operation is performed to determine whether the inputted image data is data of a non-flat-luminance image (presumed to have periodicity) or data of a flat-luminance image. Although, in the first embodiment, four pixels are used to detect the flatness of an image, it goes without saying that the invention is not limited to such an arrangement.

[0049]

On the other hand, the right flatness detecting operation is performed in the same manner with the use of pixels "6", "7", "8" and "9" shown in Fig. 7.

[0050]

The selector means 105 receives a result of the processing operation of the first filter means 103, a result of the processing operation of the second filter means 104, the target pixel signal TG1 and the target-pixel position information TG2, and outputs the target pixel signal TG1 as it stands when the target-pixel position information TG2 has

indicated that the position of the target pixel does not correspond to any joint portion.

[0051]

In cases where the position of the target pixel corresponds to a joint portion, the selector means 105 selects and outputs one of a result of the processing operation of the first filter means 103 and a result of the processing operation of the second filter means 104 according to the selection signal SL.

[0052]

In the first embodiment as described above, each joint portion of the image sensors is made to have a distance (length) corresponding approximately to two pixels, and one pixel in the distance of the joint portion is computed through interpolation with the use of neighboring pixel data. The interpolation computing operation is performed by means of digital filters that perform convolution computation on neighboring pixel data. First, such a filter as to make it possible to perform interpolation computation without deterioration of image quality if image data is data of an image having periodicity is designed by means of the first filter means 103, which is a digital filter of the filter size in which five pixels on each of the right and left sides of the target pixel are used. However, in the case of the interpolation computation by the first filter means 103,

if image data is data of an image having large variation of luminance values and having no periodicity, such as a boundary between a sheet surface and characters, deterioration of image quality would be caused. Therefore, there is provided the second filter means 104, which is suitable for performing interpolation computation on data of an image having little periodicity, without deterioration of image quality, and which is a digital filter of the small filter size in which interpolation pixel data is generated with a mean value of data for one pixel on the right side and data for one pixel on the left side of the target pixel. Then, it is determined whether the distribution of luminance levels on each of the right and left sides of the target pixel to be subjected to interpolation is flat. If the distribution of luminance levels is determined to be flat, image data is considered to be data of an image having little periodicity, and, therefore, a result of the interpolation computing operation provided by the second filter means 104 is used for interpolation.

[0053]

Thus, there are provided the first filter means 103 and the second filter means 104, which are adaptively changed over. Accordingly, even in an image reading apparatus having such an image reading sensor that a plurality of image sensors are arranged in a row, it is possible to



simply and precisely compensate for missing data corresponding to joint portions of the image sensors through interpolation so as to obtain a high-quality image without making any conspicuous noise caused by the joint portions of the image sensors.

[0054]

(Second Embodiment)

In a second embodiment of the invention, the selection signal generating means 102 is configured as shown in Fig. 8.

[0055]

Referring to Fig. 8, reference numeral 801 represents left flatness detecting means, reference numeral 802 represents right flatness detecting means, and reference numeral 803 represents AND processing means. These functions are the same as those shown in Fig. 5 and perform the same processing operation, and, therefore, the details thereof are omitted from the following description. Reference numeral 901 represents center flatness detecting means, reference numeral 902 represents center flatness exception detecting means, reference numeral 903 represents OR processing means, and reference numeral 904 represents AND processing means.

[0056]

In the second embodiment, with the selection signal generating means 102 provided with the center flatness

detecting means 901 and the center flatness exception detecting means 902, it is possible to generate a more highly accurate selection signal SL.

[0057]

Fig. 9 is a graph showing an example of image that is not suited for a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103. In the graph of Fig. 9, the abscissa axis represents a pixel, and the ordinate axis represents the luminance level, thereby illustrating the distribution of luminance levels in the main-scanning direction. When the luminance level is high, it indicates a bright pixel, and when the luminance level is low, it indicates a dark pixel.

[0058]

In the case of the example of image shown in Fig. 9, the target pixel is situated in the position "5" as shown in Fig. 7. If image data of such a target pixel is processed by the first filter means 103, it would result in a darker pixel than the surrounding pixels. If such a darker pixel continues for several lines in the sub-scanning direction, the joint portions would become conspicuous.

[0059]

It would be seen from the graph of Fig. 9 that the example of image represents an image having no periodicity or having a too long period to detect with 11 pixels, in which pixels situated on the left side of the target pixel

are brighter than the target pixel and pixels situated on the right side of the target pixel are darker than the target pixel. Such a distribution occurs where the pixels situated on each of the right and left sides of the target pixel correspond to dark image data, such as lines, and the pixels situated on the center correspond to bright and white image data. As mentioned in the foregoing, if such a condition continues over several lines in the sub-scanning direction, a dark linear noise would be caused at a bright image portion located between two dark image data. In that event, using the processing operation of the second filter means 104 makes it possible to perform an adequate interpolation processing operation. In other words, a mean value between data for the pixel situated in the position "4" and data for the pixel situated in the position "6" is used as interpolation pixel data, so that any extremely-dark and conspicuous noise, as in the case shown in Fig. 9, can be prevented.

[0060]

In that event, in order to avoid the above-mentioned problem, the center flatness detecting means 901 outputs the selection signal SL at "0" to cause the result of processing provided by the second processing means 104 to be selected. The center flatness detecting operation is performed as described below.

[0061]

First, the center flatness detecting means 901 computes a maximum value MAX and a minimum value MIN from among four pixels (pixels "3", "4", "6" and "7" shown in Fig. 7). If a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value ( $MAX - MIN$ ) is not greater than a predetermined threshold value (TH2), the center flatness detecting means 901 determines the inputted image data to be data of a flat-luminance image and then outputs a signal at "0". If a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value ( $MAX - MIN$ ) is greater than the predetermined threshold value (TH2), the center flatness detecting means 901 determines the inputted image data to be data of a non-flat-luminance image and then outputs a signal at "1". It should be noted that, in the case of the example of image shown in Fig. 9, if the flatness detecting operation were performed with the use of four pixels situated on each of the right and left sides of the target pixel, the inputted image data would be determined to be data of a non-flat-luminance image on both the right and left sides, and a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103 would be used. Therefore, the center flatness detecting operation is performed to enable a result of processing provided by the second filter means 104 to be used regardless of results of the right and left flatness detecting operations.

[0062]

The center flatness exception detecting means 902 outputs a signal at "1" in cases where using a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103 makes it possible to perform an adequate interpolation computing operation even if the center flatness detecting means 901 has determined that the inputted image data is data of a flat-luminance image. Then, the OR processing means 903 outputs the logical sum of the output signals of the center flatness detecting means 901 and the center flatness exception detecting means 902, so that a more highly accurate selection signal SL can be generated. More specifically, in cases where the center flatness detecting means 901 outputs a signal at "0" upon determination that the inputted image data is data of a flat-luminance image and the center flatness exception detecting means 902 outputs a signal at "0" upon determination that the processing operation of the first filter means 103 is unnecessary, the OR processing means 903 outputs a signal at "0", thereby generating such a signal as to cause a result of processing provided by the second filter means 104 to be used. In other cases, the OR processing means 903 outputs a signal at "1", thereby generating such a signal as to cause a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103 to be used.

[0063]

The center flatness exception detecting means 902 is arranged to output a signal at "1" to cause a result of processing provided by the first filter means 103 to be selected in the case of an example of image shown in Fig. 10. Fig. 10 is a graph showing the distribution of luminance levels of image data for the purpose of explaining the operation of the center flatness exception detecting means 902. The graph of Fig. 10 is presumed to represent the distribution of luminance levels of an image having a period of three pixels in which two pixels are bright and one pixel is dark. Such a distribution would occur on an image having 200 lines on a print original or the like.

[0064]

In that event, if an interpolation computing operation is performed with the use of a result of processing provided by the second filter means 104, a portion of image data that should be subjected to interpolation computation as a dark pixel, such as a pixel in the position "2" or "8", would be subjected to interpolation computation as a bright pixel. To prevent such an inconvenience, the center flatness exception detecting means 902 performs the following processing operation.

[0065]

With the use of pixels "1", "2", "3", "7", "8" and "9",

the center flatness exception detecting means 902 outputs a signal at "1" in cases where a difference in level (absolute value) between the pixels "1" and "2" is greater than a threshold value TH3, a difference in level (absolute value) between the pixels "9" and "8" is greater than a threshold value TH4, a difference in level (absolute value) between the pixels "1" and "3" is less than the difference in level (absolute value) between the pixels "1" and "2", and a difference in level (absolute value) between the pixels "7" and "9" is less than the difference in level (absolute value) between the pixels "8" and "9". In other cases, the center flatness exception detecting means 902 outputs a signal at "0".

[0066]

In the second embodiment, the selection signal generating means 102 is provided with the left flatness detecting means 801, the right flatness detecting means 802, the center flatness detecting means 901 and the center flatness exception detecting means 902. In cases where at least one of the left flatness detecting means 801 and the right flatness detecting means 802 has determined that the inputted image data is data of a flat-luminance image, or in cases where the center flatness detecting means 901 has determined that the inputted image data is data of a flat-luminance image and a predetermined condition has not been

satisfied in the center flatness exception detecting means 902, the selection signal generating means 102 performs such an operation as to select a result of processing provided by the second filter means 104. Accordingly, it is possible to simply and precisely compensate for missing data corresponding to joint portions of the image sensors through interpolation so as to obtain a higher-quality image without making the joint portions of the image sensors conspicuous.

[0067]

Incidentally, although each of the threshold values TH0 to TH4 used in the above-mentioned processing operations is merely a matter of design choice, if, assuming that the luminance level is divided into 255 levels, the threshold value is set to an extremely large value, such as level "200" or more, or an extremely small value, such as level "0", it becomes impossible to obtain an intended effect. Therefore, it is necessary to select an appropriate numerical value for the threshold value. For example, if the threshold value is set to level "20" or thereabout, an expected effect is easy to obtain.

[0068]

The invention is not limited to the apparatuses described in the above embodiments, and may be applied to a system composed of a plurality of apparatuses or may be applied to a device composed of a single apparatus. It goes



without saying that the invention may be accomplished by supplying, to the system or apparatus, a storage medium having software program codes stored therein for realizing the functions of each embodiment and by causing a computer (or CPU or MPU) of the system or apparatus to read and execute the program codes stored in the storage medium.

[0069]

In this instance, the program codes themselves read from the storage medium realize the functions of the above embodiments, and the storage medium having the program codes stored therein constitutes the invention. As a storage medium for supplying the program codes, there may be used, for example, a floppy (trademark) disk, a hard disk, an optical disk, a magneto-optical disk, a CD-ROM, a CD-R, a magnetic tape, a nonvolatile memory card, a ROM, etc. Further, it goes without saying that not only the step of realizing the functions of the above embodiments by executing the program codes read by the computer but also the step of realizing the functions of the above embodiments by causing an OS or the like working on the computer to perform a part or the whole of actual processing operations on the basis of instructions represented by the program codes may be included in the invention.

[0070]

In addition, it goes without saying that the step of

realizing the functions of the above embodiments by causing the program codes read from the storage medium to be written in a memory provided on a function expansion board inserted into a computer or a function expansion unit connected to a computer and, then, causing a CPU or the like provided on the function expansion board or the function expansion unit to perform a part or the whole of actual processing operations on the basis of instructions represented by the program codes.

[0071]

[Advantages]

As has been described above, according to the invention, even when there is a target pixel to be interpolated as in the case of reading an image with an image reading apparatus having a plurality of image reading sensors that are joined with one another, it is possible to simply and precisely compensate for target pixel data through interpolation so as to obtain a high-quality image.

[Brief Description of the Drawings]

[Fig. 1]

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing the arrangement of an interpolation computing portion provided in an image reading apparatus (scanner) according to a first embodiment of the invention.

[Fig. 2]

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the appearance of the image reading apparatus according to each embodiment of the invention.

[Fig. 3]

Fig. 3 is a diagram for illustrating the operation of an image reading sensor according to each embodiment of the invention.

[Fig. 4]

Fig. 4 is a graph showing a spatial frequency response of coefficients that are used in first filter means 103.

[Fig. 5]

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing the internal arrangement of selection signal generating means shown in Fig. 1.

[Fig. 6]

Fig. 6 is a graph showing an example of image that is not suited for a result of processing provided by the first filter means shown in Fig. 1.

[Fig. 7]

Fig. 7 is a diagram showing the positions of pixels for the purpose of explaining various processing operations.

[Fig. 8]

Fig. 8 is a block diagrams showing the internal arrangement of selection signal generating means according to a second embodiment of the invention.

[Fig. 9]

Fig. 9 is a graph showing the distribution of luminance levels of image data for the purpose of explaining a center flatness detecting operation.

[Fig. 10]

Fig. 10 is a graph showing the distribution of luminance levels of image data for the purpose of explaining a center flatness exception detecting operation.

[Reference Numerals]

- 31: one-line image reading sensor
- 31-1 to 31-10: image sensors
- 101: image input means
- 102: selection signal generating means
- 103: first filter means
- 104: second filter means
- 105: selector means

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【補正により増加する請求項の数】 8

## 【手続補正1】

【補正対象書類名】 明細書  
【補正対象項目名】 全文  
【補正方法】 変更  
【補正の内容】

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【発明の名称】 画像読み取り装置、データ補間方法及び制御プログラム

## 【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段と、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画素補間手段と、を有する画像読み取り装置において、

前記画素補間手段は、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出する平坦度検出手段と、前記平坦度検出手段の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するフィルタサイズ選択手段と、前記欠陥画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、前記選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出する補間データ算出手段と、を有することを特徴とする画像読み取り装置。

【請求項2】 前記画像読み取り手段は、所定の間隔を空けて一列に配置された複数のイメージセンサからなり、前記注目画素は、隣接するイメージセンサ同士の間に対応する画素であることを特徴とする請求項1記載の画像読み取り装置。

【請求項3】 前記補間データ算出手段は、フィルタサイズの異なる複数のフィルタを有することを特徴とする請求項1又は2に記載の画像読み取り装置。

【請求項4】 前記フィルタサイズは、前記補間データ算出手段が前記補間データを算出する際に参照する画素数に基づくものであることを特徴とする請求項1乃至3のいずれか1項に記載の画像読み取り装置。

【請求項5】 前記平坦度検出手段は、前記注目画素の両側それぞれに位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出することを特徴とする請求項1乃至4のいずれか1項に記載の画像読み取り装置。

【請求項6】 前記平坦度検出手段は、前記注目画素の両側それぞれに位置する複数の画素データの最大値及び最小値を算出し、その最大値と最小値の差が予め定められた閾値以下である場合に平坦度が高いと判定することを特徴とする請求項5に記載の画像読み取り装置。

【請求項7】 前記平坦度検出手段は、前記注目画素の両側それぞれ及び両方に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出することを特徴とする請求項5に記載の画像読み取り装置。

【請求項8】 原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相

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当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法であつて、

前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出し、その検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択し、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出することを特徴とする画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法。

【請求項9】 原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法をコンピュータにより実行するための制御プログラムであつて、

前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出するステップと、  
前記平坦度の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するステップと、  
前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズでのフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出するステップと、  
を備えたことを特徴とする制御プログラム。

【発明の詳細な説明】

【0001】

【発明の属する技術分野】

本発明は、イメージスキャナやファクシミリ装置、複写機などの画像読み取り装置、画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法及び制御プログラムに関する。

【0002】

【従来の技術】

原稿画像を画素毎にデジタル信号として読み取る画像読み取り装置は、従来より知られている。すなわち、この画像読み取り装置は、1次元の画素配列を有する画像読み取りセンサを複数個備え、この複数の画像読み取りセンサを、画素配列の方向に一行に複数個配置することで必要とされる画像読み取り範囲を満足するように構成され、画素配列と垂直な方向に移動しながら原稿画像を2次元デジタル信号として読み取るような構成になっている。

【0003】

しかし、この種の画像読み取り装置では、複数個設置された画像読み取りセンサ間のつなぎ部分の距離を精度よく約1画素分の距離にすることは、読み取り解像度が高くなってくると困難になってくる。センサ間のつなぎ部分の距離が離れると、印刷など網点画像等の周期性のある原稿画像を読み取った場合に、センサのつなぎの部分で読み取れない欠落データが生じ、筋状のノイズが発生してしまい、画質劣化の原因となっていた。

【0004】

このようなセンサつなぎ部分の欠落データを補間するため、一次元のフィルタ演算を行う技術が提案されている（例えば、特許文献1参照）。この提案では、補間位置であっても補間位置でなくても、全てのエレメントにおいてこのフィルタ演算が行われ、補間位置以外の任意のデータ位置でのフィルタ演算結果と実データ（輝度値）との差分を求め、実データに最も近かったフィルタ演算結果を補間位置でのフィルタ演算結果として選択するものである。

【0005】

【特許文献1】 特開2003-8853号公報

【0006】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】

しかしながら、上記従来の技術（例えば、特許文献1）では、センサつなぎ部分以外の画素において、複数のフィルタ演算結果と実際の輝度値との比較を1つずつ行うので、処理が複雑化する。さらに高精度な補間を行うためには、参照データの数を増やす必要があり、センサつなぎ部分の欠落データを簡単且つ高精度に補間して高品質な画像を得る観点から限界があった。

【0007】

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本発明は上記従来の問題点に鑑み、複数の画像読み取りセンサをつなぎ合わせた画像読み取り装置であっても、センサつなぎ目部分の欠落データを簡単且つ高精度に補間して高品質な画像を得ることができる画像読み取り装置、画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法及び制御プログラムを提供することを目的とする。

【0008】

【課題を解決するための手段】

上記目的を達成するために、請求項1に記載の画像読み取り装置は、原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段と、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画素補間手段と、を有する画像読み取り装置において、前記画素補間手段は、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出する平坦度検出手段と、前記平坦度検出手段の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するフィルタサイズ選択手段と、前記欠陥画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、前記選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出する補間データ算出手段と、を有することを特徴とする。

【0009】

また、請求項8に記載のデータ補間方法は、原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法であって、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出し、その検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択し、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出することを特徴とする。

【0010】

また、請求項9に記載の制御プログラムは、原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法をコンピュータにより実行するための制御プログラムであって、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出するステップと、前記平坦度の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するステップと、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズでのフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出するステップと、を備えたことを特徴とする。

【0011】

【発明の実施の形態】

以下、本発明の実施の形態を図面に基づいて説明する。

【0012】

〔第1実施形態〕

＜画像読み取り装置の概略構成＞

図1は、本発明の第1実施形態に係る画像読み取り装置（スキャナ）内に設けられた補間演算部の構成を示すブロック図であり、図2は、本実施形態の画像読み取り装置の外観図である。

【0013】

初めに図2において、本実施形態の画像読み取り装置であるスキャナは、原稿となる紙上の画像を照明し、1ライン画像読み取りセンサ（図3参照）を走査することで、ラスタイメージデータとして電気信号に変換する。スキャナに設けられた原稿台ガラス上に原稿をセットして、装置使用者が図示されない操作部において読み取りの指示を与えると、スキャナが原稿を読み取り上述のように電気信号に変換する。また、装置使用者が原稿用紙を原稿フィーダ201のトレイ202にセットし、操作部において読み取りの指示を与えることにより、フィーダ201が原稿用紙を一枚ずつフィードして原稿画像の読み取り動作を行うようにしてもよい。

【0014】

＜画像読み取りセンサの詳細＞

図3（a）、（b）は、本実施形態の画像読み取りセンサの動作を説明するための図で

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あり、同図(a)は原稿台ガラス30と1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31を示し、同図(b)は1ライン画像読み取りセンサの拡大図を示している。

【0015】

図3(a)において、装置使用者は、読み取りたい画像が下向きになるように原稿を原稿台ガラス30上にセットすると、原稿は照明手段で照明され、その反射してきた光がレンズ(セルフオック(商標)レンズアレイなど)を通して1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31に結像される。1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31は、その光像をアナログ電気信号に変換し、そして図示されないA/D変換装置によりデジタルの画像データが生成される。1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31は、CCDデバイス等の光電変換デバイスを備えて主走査方向に画像データを生成するので、スキャナは、該1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31を主走査方向と垂直な方向(副走査方向)に走査することにより、2次元画像データを生成することができる。

【0016】

1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31は、複数の小さなイメージセンサ31-1~31-10から成り、必要な主走査画素数を供給できるように構成されている。300mmを600dpiで読み取ると想定すると、必要となる主走査画素数は、

$$300\text{mm} / (25.4 / 600) = \text{約} 7100 \text{画素}$$

但し、1インチ[inch]=25.4mm

となる。各イメージセンサ31-1~31-10は、それぞれ710画素から構成され、710×10個で7100画素を構成することになる。1画素の距離は、600dpiの読み取り解像度と想定しているため、

$$1 / 600 \text{インチ} = 25.4 / 600 \text{mm} = \text{約} 0.0423 \text{mm}$$

である。よって、図3(b)に示す距離Aは、本実施形態では約0.0423mmである。

【0017】

イメージセンサ31-1~31-9の最後の画素Lと隣合うセンサの最初の画素Fとの間の距離を約0.0423mmとすれば問題がないのであるが、該イメージセンサのチップの構成上、非常に困難もしくは物理的に不可能であることがあり、より長い距離が必要とされる場合がある。本実施形態では、距離Aの2倍の距離2Aとすることで、各イメージセンサ31-1~31-10の実装を容易にしている。

【0018】

また、図3(b)に示すように画素Lと画素Fの間が他の画素よりも離れているために、このままでは各イメージセンサ31-1~31-10のつなぎ目が目立ってしまうことになる。そこで、本実施形態では、画素Lと画素Fの間の読み取ることのできない画素Hを後述する補間演算部で算出し、各イメージセンサ31-1~31-10間のチップのつなぎ目を目立たなくするようにしている。

【0019】

補間される画素Hは、各イメージセンサ31-1~31-10のつなぎ目毎に存在するため、本実施形態では、イメージセンサ1個目と2個目の間の画素H1から、9個目と10個目の間の画素H9までの合計9箇所で補間演算部による算出が必要となる。

【0020】

<補間演算部の詳細>

図1に示すように、補間演算部は、画像入力手段101、セレクト信号生成手段102、第1のフィルタ手段103、第2のフィルタ手段104、及びセレクト手段105で構成されている。

【0021】

画像入力手段101から画像データが入力されると、周期性のある画像データの補間に適した第1のフィルタ手段103と、第1のフィルタ手段103に適さない画像データの補間を行う第2のフィルタ手段104とで畳み込み演算を行い、それぞれフィルタ処理後の信号を生成する。セレクト信号生成手段102は、画像データが第1のフィルタ手段1



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03に適した画像であるかどうかを判定し、セレクト信号 $S_L$ を生成して出力する。

【0022】

セレクト手段105は、第1、第2のフィルタ手段103、104でそれぞれ演算された各画像信号及び注目画素信号TG1の3つの画像信号と、注目画素位置情報TG2とが入力され、注目画素位置情報TG2が、補間を必要としている位置を示していない場合には、注目画素信号TG1をそのまま出力する。補間を必要としている位置、すなわち画素H1～H9の位置の場合には、セレクト信号 $S_L$ に応じて、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理信号もしくは第2のフィルタ手段104の処理信号のどちらかを選択して出力する。

【0023】

以下、この補間演算部の処理について、さらに詳しく説明する。

【0024】

1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31で読み取られた画像データは、画像入力手段101から入力される。本実施形態では、注目画素を中心にして、左右に5画素ずつ、計11画素分のデータが入力される。各画素は、0～255レベルの8ビット多値輝度信号であるとする。注目画素が1画素ずつずれていくように構成され、注目画素が6画素目であれば、1～11画素目の画像データが供給されて処理を施し、注目画素である6画素目の処理が終了すると注目画素を7画素目として、2～12画素目の画像データが供給され、主走査画素数分の処理を続ける。また、主走査画素数分の処理が終了したら、副走査方向に1ライン進み、同様に処理を続け、副走査読み取りライン分だけ処理を続けて終了する。

【0025】

画像データの供給分が11画素というのは、フィルタのサイズにより決定される値である。注目画素が画像端部である場合には、11画素分のデータを供給できない場合があるが、その場合は、処理を行わず、入力された画素データをそのまま出力すればよい。

【0026】

ここで、1ライン画像読み取りセンサ31から入力される画像データは、主走査方向に $710 \times 10 = 7100$ 画素であるが、処理の簡素化を図るために、上述した補間画素H1からH9は、それぞれイメージセンサ31-1～31-9の最後の画素Lと隣のイメージセンサの最初の画素Fとの間に、ダミーデータとして挿入されているとする。補間画素H1～H9は、最終的に補間演算されて出力されるため、ダミーデータはどのような値であっても構わないが、ここでは、0を入力することにする。

【0027】

以上のことから、1画素目～710画素目は、1個目のイメージセンサ31-1で生成された画素データであり、711画素目はH1（ダミーデータ）であり、712画素目～1421画素目は、2個目のイメージセンサ31-2で生成された画素データであり、1422画素目はH2（ダミーデータ）である。以降同じように入力されることとなり、入力される画像データは、主走査画素数7100に欠陥画素数9を加えた計7109画素データとなる。補間が必要となる画素H1～H9の位置は、

$(\text{イメージセンサの画素数}(710) + 1) \times N \text{画素目}$

但し、Nは整数

となる。

【0028】

要求される主走査画素数は7100画素と述べたが、要求されるよりも広い範囲を読み取れるように構成されても、範囲外の画素は使用せず破棄すればよいので、大きな問題ではない。

【0029】

画像入力手段101から入力された画像データは、第1のフィルタ手段103に入力される。入力される画像データは、注目画素と注目画素近傍の左右5画素ずつの計11画素とし、畳み込み演算処理が11画素のデータを用いて行われる。第1のフィルタ手段103の処理は、前述の通り、周期性のある画像データに対して有効な補間演算を行うために必要となる。

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## 【0030】

ここで、11画素のフィルタ係数の一例を以下に示す。

## 【0031】

23, -49, 75, -98, 113, 0, 113, -98, 75, -49, 23

このフィルタ係数において、真中の係数「0」は注目画素用の係数である。補間演算が必要となる画素H1～H9は、ダミーデータが予めセットしており、畳み込み演算に反映させないように0となっている。そのため、注目画素を除く10画素の畳み込み演算となっている。上記係数を用いて、各画素は、それぞれの位置に対応した係数と掛け算される。例えば、最も左の係数「23」は、注目画素から左に5画素目の画像データと掛け算され、左から2番目の係数「-49」は、注目画素から左に4画素目の画像データと掛け算されといった具合に演算される。

## 【0032】

それら掛け算の結果を10画素分、全て足された総和に対して128で割った値を算出するように第1のフィルタ手段103は構成される。128という数字は、フィルタ係数の正規化数である。同じ周波数応答を得るためには、正規化数に応じて、フィルタ係数が変わってくる。ハード化やソフト処理時の高速化のために2のべき乗となるようにすることが望ましく、本実施形態では、仮に128としている。

## 【0033】

図4は、第1のフィルタ手段103に使用する上述の係数の空間周波数応答を示すグラフであり、横軸が空間周波数（lp/mm）、縦軸がゲインを表している。

## 【0034】

本実施形態では、読み取り解像度を600dpiとしているために、300dpi＝約12 [lp/mm] までのグラフとなっている。0 [lp/mm] ～8 [lp/mm] までほぼ1になっている。これは、8 [lp/mm] までの周波数をもつ画像であれば、ほぼ的確に補間処理ができることを表している。すなわち、原稿に印刷物のように細かい周期の網点が存在したとしても、8 [lp/mm] ＝約200線までの印刷物であれば、補間処理により近傍の画素から補間画素が的確に算出され、つなぎ目H1～H9を目立たなくすることが可能となる。

## 【0035】

また、より高周波数になると、ゲインがマイナスになってその値が大きくなっていることが判る。より高周波な成分をもつ画像に対しては、振幅が原稿とは反転し、振幅が不自然に大きくなることを表しているが、現状では、200線を超える周波数の原稿は稀であるために、あまり大きな問題とはならない。

## 【0036】

画像入力手段101から入力された画像データは、第2のフィルタ手段104にも入力される。入力される画像データは、注目画素と注目画素の隣の左右1画素ずつの計3画素とし、畳み込み演算処理が3画素のデータを用いて行われる。第2のフィルタ手段104の処理は、前述の通り、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理に適さない画像データに対して有効な補間演算を行うために必要となる。また、周期性のない画像を対象にするため、第1のフィルタ手段103のサイズよりも小さいフィルタサイズで構成することが可能である。

## 【0037】

3画素のフィルタ係数の一例を以下に示す。

## 【0038】

64, 0, 64

このフィルタ係数において、真中の係数は、注目画素用の係数であり、0となっている。補間演算が必要となる画素H1～H9は、ダミーデータが予めセットしており、畳み込み演算に反映させないように0となっている。そのため、注目画素を除く2画素の畳み込み演算である。また、第1のフィルタ手段103と同様、正規化数が128であり、畳み込み演算された後で、128で割り算をすることで、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理は

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行われる。ここでは、正規化数を128としたが、正規化数を2として、係数を左右画素が1、注目画素が0として回路構成を簡単にしてもよい。ここでは、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理と同じ正規化数としたが、特に同じである必要はない。

#### 【0039】

画像入力手段101は、セレクト信号生成手段102にも画像データを供給する。セレクト信号生成手段102は、第1のフィルタ手段103に適さない周期性のない画像かどうかの判断を行い、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理に適した画像と判断すると1を、そうでなければ0を出力し、セクタ手段105にセレクト信号SLを供給する。

#### 【0040】

<セレクト信号生成手段102の詳細>

図5は、セレクト信号生成手段102の内部構成を示す図である。

#### 【0041】

図中の801は左平坦度検出手段、802は右平坦度検出手段である。803はAND処理手段である。左平坦度検出手段801及び右平坦度検出手段802は、平坦であると判断すると0を、平坦でないと判断すると1を出力する。すなわち、どちらも平坦でないと判断されると1を出力して、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理結果を用いるというセレクト信号SLを出力し、どちらか一方でも平坦であると判断すると0を出力して、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理結果を用いるというセレクト信号SLを出力することになる。

#### 【0042】

図6は、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理結果に適していない画像例を示すグラフである。

#### 【0043】

このグラフの横軸は画素を示し、縦軸は輝度レベルを示しており、輝度の主走査方向の分布である。輝度レベルは、値が大きければ明るく、小さければ暗い画素となる。注目画素は、供給された画像データを表す図7に示すように、5の位置（「\*」印）であり（左から右の画素に向かって0～10の番号が付されている）、第1のフィルタ手段103で演算した結果、周りの画素よりも暗くなってしまっており、これが副走査方向に数ライン続くことになるため、つなぎ目が目立ってしまうことになる。

#### 【0044】

注目画素より左は明るく、右は暗くなっており、周期性のない画像であることが図6のグラフから判る。左側が下地部で文字が右側に存在する場合にこのような分布となる。上述の通り、副走査方向に数ラインに亘ってこのような状態が続くと、文字部に近接した下地部に暗い線状のノイズが発生してしまう。このような場合、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理を用いることで、的確な補間演算が可能なが判る。すなわち、4の位置の画素と6の位置の画素の平均となるため、図6のように極端に暗くなって目立ったりすることがなくなる。

#### 【0045】

このように、周期性がなく第1のフィルタ手段103に適さない画像データ、輝度分布であることを検出した場合には、第2のフィルタ手段104の結果を用いるようにすることで、つなぎ目を目立たなくすることが可能となる。

#### 【0046】

左平坦度検出は、以下のように行われる。

#### 【0047】

まず4画素分（図7に示した画素1、画素2、画素3、画素4）の最大値MAX、最小値MINを算出し、その最大値と最小値の差（MAX-MIN）が予め定められた閾値（TH0）以下であるならば、平坦と判断して「0」を出力し、それ以外であるならば、平坦でないと判断して、「1」を出力する。

#### 【0048】

周期性があり、一定以上の振幅をもっているのであれば、4画素の間にMAX-MINの差が大きい値になることが予想される。これを判定するために上述のようにすることで

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、平坦でない（周期性があると推定される）か、平坦かを検出する。本実施形態では、4画素で平坦度検出を行ったが、この限りではないことは言うまでもない。

【0049】

一方、右平坦度検出は、図7に示した画素6、7、8、9で、同様の処理を行う。

【0050】

セクタ手段105は、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理結果と、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理結果と、注目画素信号TG1及び注目画素位置情報TG2を入力し、注目画素位置情報TG2がつなぎ目部分でないと判断したときは、注目画素信号TG1をそのまま出力する。

【0051】

また、注目画素位置がつなぎ目部分であった場合には、セクタ信号SLにより、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理結果もしくは第2のフィルタ手段104の処理結果を選択して出力する。

【0052】

このように本実施形態では、センサのつなぎ部分を約2画素分の距離として、その間の1画素を周辺の画素データを用いて補間演算する。補間演算は、周辺画素データを畳み込み演算するデジタルフィルタを用いて行われる。左右5画素ずつのフィルタサイズのデジタルフィルタである第1のフィルタ手段103を用いて、周期的な画像であれば、画質劣化が少なく補間できるようにフィルタを設計する。但し、この方法で補間すると、下地と文字の境界のような輝度値が大きく異なり且つ周期性の少ない画像の場合に画質劣化が生じてしまうため、周期性の少ない画像で画質劣化が少ない左右1画素ずつの平均値で補間画素データを生成する小さいフィルタサイズのデジタルフィルタである第2のフィルタ手段104を用意しておいて、補間すべき注目画素の左右側それぞれの輝度分布が平坦かどうかを検出し、平坦である場合には、画像に周期性が少ないと判断して第2のフィルタ手段104で得られた補間結果を用いるように構成する。

【0053】

このように、第1と第2のフィルタ手段103、104を備え、これを適応的に切り換えることで、複数のイメージセンサを一行に配置した画像読み取りセンサを有する画像読み取り装置であっても、センサつなぎ目部分の欠落データを簡単且つ高精度に補間することができるので、イメージセンサ間のつなぎ目を目立たせることなく良好な画像を得ることができる。

【0054】

〔第2実施形態〕

本実施形態は、セレクト信号生成手段102を図8に示すように構成したものである。

【0055】

同図において、801が左平坦度検出手段、802が右平坦度検出手段、803がAND処理手段であり、これらの機能は、図5に図示したものと同一であり、同様の処理を行うため、説明を省略する。901はセンタ平坦度検出手段、902はセンタ平坦度例外検出手段、903はOR処理手段、904はAND処理手段である。

【0056】

本実施形態では、セクタ信号生成手段102に、センタ平坦度検出手段901及びセンタ平坦度例外検出手段902を設けることで、より精度の高いセレクト信号SLを生成することができる。

【0057】

図9は、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理結果に適していない画像例を示す図であり、横軸が画素を示し、縦軸は輝度レベルを示しており、輝度の主走査方向の分布である。輝度レベルは、値が大きければ明るく、小さければ暗い画素となる。

【0058】

同図において、注目画素は、図7に示すように5の位置であり、第1のフィルタ手段103で演算した結果、周りの画素よりも暗くなってしまっており、これが副走査方向に数

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ライン続くことになるため、つなぎ目が目立ってしまうことになる。

#### 【0059】

注目画素より左は明るく右は暗くなっており、周期性がない画像であるか、もしくは1画素で検出するには長すぎる周期であることが図9のグラフから判る。左右に線があるなど暗い画像データで、真中が明るく抜けている場合の分布となる。上述の通り、副走査方向に数ラインに亘ってこのような状態が続くと、暗い画像データの間に明るい画像部に暗い線状のノイズが発生してしまう。このような場合、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理を用いることで、的確な補間演算が可能なが判る。すなわち、4の位置の画素と6の位置の画素の平均となるため、図9に示すケースのように極端に暗くなって目立ったりすることがなくなる。

#### 【0060】

センタ平坦度検出手段901は、このような場合にセレクト信号SLを0とし、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理を選択させるように動作することで、上述の問題を回避しようというものである。センタ平坦度検出は、以下のように行われる。

#### 【0061】

まず4画素分(図7に示した画素3、画素4、画素6、画素7)の最大値MAX、最小値MINを算出し、その最大値と最小値の差(MAX-MIN)が予め定められた閾値(TH2)以下であるならば、平坦と判断して0を出力する。それ以外ならば、1を出力する。図9のような画像の場合、左右4画素ずつの平坦度検出では左右ともに平坦でないと検出され、第1のフィルタ部103の処理が適用されてしまう。そこで、センタの平坦度検出を行い、左右の平坦度検出結果にかかわらず、第2のフィルタ部104の処理を適用できるようにする。

#### 【0062】

センタ平坦度例外検出手段902は、センタ平坦度検出手段901が平坦であると判断した場合でも、第1のフィルタ手段103を使う方が的確に補間演算できる場合に1を出力し、センタ平坦度検出手段901とセンタ平坦度例外検出手段902の出力の論理和をOR処理手段903で出力することにより、より高精度なセレクト信号SLを生成する。すなわち、センタ平坦度検出手段901が平坦と判断して0を出力し、且つセンタ平坦度例外検出手段902が第1のフィルタ手段103の処理が必要でないと判断して0を出力した場合に、OR処理手段903は、0を出力し、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理を使うような信号を生成する。それ以外の場合は、OR処理手段903は、1を出力し、第1のフィルタ手段103の処理を使うような信号を生成することになる。

#### 【0063】

センタ平坦度例外検出手段902は、図10に示すようなケースに、第1のフィルタ手段103を選択するように1を出力することになる。図10は、センタ平坦度例外検出手段902を説明するための画像データの輝度分布図であり、2画素は明るい画素で1画素は暗い画素の3画素周期の画像の輝度分布を表していると推定される。200線の印刷原稿などでこのような輝度分布を示す。

#### 【0064】

このような場合に、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理を使用して補間演算をすると、画素2や画素8のように暗い画素として補間演算すべきところを図10のケースのように明るい画素として補間演算してしまう。これを防ぐために、センタ平坦度例外検出手段902は、以下のような処理とする。

#### 【0065】

図7に示した画素1、2、3、7、8、9を用いて、画素1と画素2のレベル差(絶対値)が閾値TH3を超えており、且つ画素9と画素8のレベル差(絶対値)が閾値TH4を超えており、且つ画素1と画素3のレベル差(絶対値)が、画素1と画素2のレベル差(絶対値)より少なく、且つ画素7と画素9のレベル差(絶対値)が画素8と画素9のレベル差(絶対値)より少ない場合に、1を出力する。それ以外は、0を出力する。

#### 【0066】

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本実施形態では、左平坦度検出手段801、右平坦度検出手段802、センタ平坦度検出手段901、及びセンタ平坦度例外検出手段902を有し、左平坦度検出手段801及び右平坦度検出手段802のいずれか1つでも平坦であると判定されるか、センタ平坦度検出手段901で平坦であると検出され、且つセンタ平坦度例外検出手段902で一定の条件を満たさなかった場合に、第2のフィルタ手段104の処理を選択するように動作する。これにより、センサつなぎ目部分の欠落データを、高精度且つ簡単に補間することができるので、イメージセンサ間のつなぎ目を目立たせることなく、一層高品質な画像を得ることができる。

#### 【0067】

なお、各処理の説明で用いた閾値TH0～TH4は設計事項であるが、輝度レベルが255レベルと想定した場合に、閾値が200レベル以上などと極端に大きくしたり、0のように極端に小さくすると所望の効果が得られなくなるため、適切な数字を選ぶ必要がある。例えば、20レベル近辺とすると予想される効果が得られ易い。

#### 【0068】

本発明は、上述した実施形態の装置に限定されず、複数の機器から構成されるシステムに適用しても、1つの機器から成る装置に適用してもよい。前述した実施形態の機能を実現するソフトウェアのプログラムコードを記憶した記憶媒体をシステムあるいは装置に供給し、そのシステムあるいは装置のコンピュータ（またはCPUやMPU）が記憶媒体に格納されたプログラムコードを読み出し実行することによっても、完成されることは言うまでもない。

#### 【0069】

この場合、記憶媒体から読み出されたプログラムコード自体が前述した実施形態の機能を実現することになり、そのプログラムコードを記憶した記憶媒体は本発明を構成することになる。プログラムコードを供給するための記憶媒体としては、例えば、フロッピー（登録商標）ディスク、ハードディスク、光ディスク、光磁気ディスク、CD-ROM、CD-R、磁気テープ、不揮発性のメモリカード、ROMを用いることができる。また、コンピュータが読み出したプログラムコードを実行することにより、前述した実施形態の機能が実現されるだけでなく、そのプログラムコードの指示に基づき、コンピュータ上で稼動しているOSなどが実際の処理の一部または全部を行い、その処理によって前述した実施形態の機能が実現される場合も含まれることは言うまでもない。

#### 【0070】

さらに、記憶媒体から読み出されたプログラムコードが、コンピュータに挿入された機能拡張ボードやコンピュータに接続された機能拡張ユニットに備わるメモリに書き込まれた後、次のプログラムコードの指示に基づき、その拡張機能を拡張ボードや拡張ユニットに備わるCPUなどが処理を行って実際の処理の一部または全部を行い、その処理によって前述した実施形態の機能が実現される場合も含まれることは言うまでもない。

#### 【0071】

##### 【発明の効果】

以上詳細に説明したように本発明によれば、複数個の画像読み取りセンサをつなぎ合わせた画像読み取り装置により読み取りを行う場合のように補間すべき注目画素がある場合でも、注目画素データを簡単且つ高精度に補間して高品質な画像を得ることができる。

##### 【図面の簡単な説明】

##### 【図1】

本発明の第1実施形態に係る画像読み取り装置（スキャナ）内に設けられた補間演算部の構成を示すブロック図である。

##### 【図2】

各実施形態の画像読み取り装置の外観図である。

##### 【図3】

各実施形態に係る画像読み取りセンサの動作を説明するための図である。

##### 【図4】

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第1のフィルタ手段103に使用する係数の空間周波数応答を示すグラフである。

【図5】

図1中のセレクト信号生成手段の内部構成を示す図である。

【図6】

図1中の第1のフィルタ手段の処理結果に適していない画像例を示すグラフである。

【図7】

各処理を説明するための画素位置を表した図である。

【図8】

第2実施形態に係るセクタ信号生成手段を示すブロック図である。

【図9】

センタ平坦度検出処理を説明するための画像データの輝度分布図である。

【図10】

センタ平坦度例外検出処理を説明するための画像データの輝度分布図である。

【符号の説明】

31 1ライン画像読み取りセンサ

31-1～31-10 イメージセンサ

101 画像入力手段

102 セレクト信号生成手段

103 第1のフィルタ手段

104 第2のフィルタ手段

105 セレクト手段

Doc 4-2  
20050419 Reason  
for Refusal

Reference No. 253141

Dispatch No. 139214

Dispatch Date: April 19, 2005

**Notification of Reason for Refusal**

Patent Application No.	2003-064998
Drafting Date	April 12, 2005
JPO Examiner	Tsutomu WATANABE 8948 5V00
Agent / Applicant	Toshihiko WATANABE
Applied Provision	Patent Law Section 36

This application is refused for the reason mentioned below. If the applicant has any argument against the reason, such argument should be submitted within 60 days from the date on which this notification was dispatched.

**Reason**

The descriptions in claim noted below do not comply with the requirements of Patent Law Section 36(4) and 36(6).

**Note**

It is unclear what "said degree-of-correlation detecting means" in claim 7 refers to.

For the claims other than the claim specified in this notification of reason for refusal, no reason for refusal is found at present. If any reason for refusal is found later, it will be notified.

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**Record of the results of prior art search**

Technical field(s) searched:	Int. Cl(7)
	H04N1/024-1/207
	Name of DB



•Prior art document:

This record is not part of the reason for refusal.

Doc 4 · 20050417  
Reason for refusal - JP

整理番号:253141 発送番号:139214 発送日:平成17年 4月19日 1/E

**拒絶理由通知書**

特許出願の番号	特願2003-064998
起案日	平成17年 4月12日
特許庁審査官	渡辺 努 8948 5V00
特許出願人代理人	渡部 敏彦 様
適用条文	第36条

この出願は、次の理由によって拒絶をすべきものである。これについて意見があれば、この通知書の発送の日から60日以内に意見書を提出して下さい。

**理 由**

この出願は、明細書及び図面の記載が下記の点で、特許法第36条第4項及び第6項に規定する要件を満たしていない。

**記**

請求項7において、「前記相関度検出手段」とあるが、何を指すのかが不明である。

この拒絶理由通知書中で指摘した請求項以外の請求項に係る発明については、現時点では、拒絶の理由を発見しない。拒絶の理由が新たに発見された場合には拒絶の理由が通知される。

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**先行技術文献調査結果の記録**

- ・調査した分野   IPC第7版 H04N1/024-1/207  
DB名
- ・先行技術文献

この先行技術文献調査結果の記録は、拒絶理由を構成するものではない。

Doc 6-2  
050615 Amendment  
EN

[Name of Document] Amendment  
[Reference No.] 253141  
[Date of Submission] June 15, 2005  
[Destination] Commissioner of the Patent Office  
[Description of the Case]  
[Application No.] Patent Application No. 2003-64998  
[Applicant]  
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## [Amendment 1]

[Name of Document to be Amended] Specification

[Name of Item to be Amended] Claims

[Manner of Amendment] Change

[Content of Amendment]

[Claims]

[Claim 1] An image reading apparatus comprising image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel; and pixel interpolation means for compensating for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data,

said pixel interpolation means comprising degree-of-flatness detecting means for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; filter-size selecting means for selecting a filter size according to a result of detection provided by said degree-of-flatness detecting means; and interpolation-data computing means for computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Claim 2] An image reading apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said image reading means is composed of a plurality of image sensors arranged in a row at predetermined intervals, and the target pixel is a pixel corresponding to a space between adjacent image sensors.

[Claim 3] An image reading apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said interpolation-data computing means includes a plurality of filters having respective different filter sizes.

[Claim 4] An image reading apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said filter size is based on the number of pixels that said interpolation-data computing means makes reference to when computing the interpolation data.

[Claim 5] An image reading apparatus according to any

one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means detects the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel.

[Claim 6] An image reading apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means computes a maximum value and a minimum value of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel, and determines that the degree of flatness is high, if a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value is not greater than a predetermined threshold value.

[Claim 7] An image reading apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means detects the degree of flatness of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel.

[Claim 8] A data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, said data interpolation method comprising:

detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel;  
selecting a filter size according to a result of detection

of the degree of flatness; and computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Claim 9] A control program for allowing a computer to execute a data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, the method comprising:

a step of detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel;

a step of selecting a filter size according to a result of detection of the degree of flatness; and

a step of computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Amendment 2]

[Name of Document to be Amended] Specification

[Name of Item to be Amended] 0008

[Manner of Amendment] Change

[Content of Amendment]

[0008]

[Means for Solving the Problems]

To attain the above object, an image reading apparatus as set forth in claim 1 is an image reading apparatus including image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel; and pixel interpolation means for compensating for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data. The pixel interpolation means includes degree-of-flatness detecting means for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; filter-size selecting means for selecting a filter size according to a result of detection provided by the degree-of-flatness detecting means; and interpolation-data computing means for computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected.

[Amendment 3]

[Name of Document to be Amended] Specification

[Name of Item to be Amended] 0027

[Manner of Amendment] Change

[Content of Amendment]

[0027]

It would be seen from the foregoing that the first pixel to the 710-th pixel correspond to pixel data generated by the first image sensor 31-1, the 711-th pixel corresponds to "H1" (dummy data), the 712-th pixel to the 1421-st pixel correspond to pixel data generated by the second image sensor 31-2, and the 1422-nd pixel corresponds to "H2" (dummy data). The subsequent pixels correspond to image data generated and inputted in the same way. Accordingly, image data to be inputted are considered to be image data for 7109 pixels in total, "7109" being obtained by adding the number "9" of interpolation pixels to the number "7100" of main-scanning pixels. The position of each of the pixels H1 to H9, which are required to be subjected to interpolation, becomes:

(the number "710" of pixels of each image sensor + 1) .  
x N-th pixel,  
where N is an integral number.



前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出し、その検出結果に応

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じてフィルタサイズを選択し、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、  
選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出するこ  
とを特徴とする画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法。

【請求項9】 原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相  
当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法をコン  
ピュータにより実行するための制御プログラムであって、  
前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出するステップと、  
前記平坦度の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するステップと、  
前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズで  
のフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出するステップと、  
を備えたことを特徴とする制御プログラム。

【手続補正2】

【補正対象書類名】 明細書  
【補正対象項目名】 0008  
【補正方法】 変更  
【補正の内容】

【0008】

【課題を解決するための手段】

上記目的を達成するために、請求項1に記載の画像読み取り装置は、原稿画像を画素毎  
に読み取る画像読み取り手段と、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間  
する画素補間手段と、を有する画像読み取り装置において、前記画素補間手段は、前記注  
目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出する平坦度検出手段と、前記平  
坦度検出手段の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するフィルタサイズ選択手段と、  
前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、前記選択されたフィルタサイズ  
でフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出する補間データ算出手段と、を有  
することを特徴とする。

【手続補正3】

【補正対象書類名】 明細書  
【補正対象項目名】 0027  
【補正方法】 変更  
【補正の内容】  
【0027】

以上のことから、1画素目～710画素目は、1個目のイメージセンサ31-1で生成  
された画素データであり、711画素目はH1（ダミーデータ）であり、712画素目～  
1421画素目は、2個目のイメージセンサ31-2で生成された画素データであり、1  
422画素目はH2（ダミーデータ）である。以降同じように入力されることとなり、入  
力される画像データは、主走査画素数7100に補間画素数9を加えた計7109画素デ  
ータとなる。補間が必要となる画素H1～H9の位置は、

$(\text{イメージセンサの画素数}(710) + 1) \times N$ 画素目

但し、Nは整数

となる。

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[Destination]            Examiner of the Patent Office,  
                             Tsutomu WATANABE  
[Description of the Case]  
    [Application No.]     Patent Application No. 2003-64998  
[Applicant]  
    [Id. No.]              000001007  
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[Agent]  
    [Id. No.]              100081880  
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    [Phone No.]           03-3580-8464  
[Dispatch No.]          139214

[Content of Argument]

(1) We examined the notification of reason for refusal indicating that "the invention according to the subject application is unpatentable since the descriptions in the claim do not comply with the requirements of Patent Law Section 36(4) and 36(6)" and submitted the amendment to amend the specification.

(2) Features of the Amended Subject Invention

An image reading apparatus according to the invention

in claim 1 of the amended subject application is "an image reading apparatus comprising image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel; and pixel interpolation means for compensating for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, said pixel interpolation means comprising degree-of-flatness detecting means for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; filter-size selecting means for selecting a filter size according to a result of detection provided by said degree-of-flatness detecting means; and interpolation-data computing means for computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected".

The image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 2 of the amended subject application is "according to claim 1, wherein said image reading means is composed of a plurality of image sensors arranged in a row at predetermined intervals, and the target pixel is a pixel corresponding to a space between adjacent image sensors";

The image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 3 of the amended subject application is "according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said interpolation-data computing means includes a plurality of filters having respective

different filter sizes";

The image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 4 of the amended subject application is "according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said filter size is based on the number of pixels that said interpolation-data computing means makes reference to when computing the interpolation data";

The image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 5 of the amended subject application is "according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means detects the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel";

The image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 6 of the amended subject application is "according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means computes a maximum value and a minimum value of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel, and determines that the degree of flatness is high, if a difference between the maximum value and the minimum value is not greater than a predetermined threshold value";

The image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 7 of the amended subject application is "according to claim 5, wherein said degree-of-flatness detecting means

detects the degree of flatness of the plurality of pixel data situated on each of both sides of the target pixel";

A data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus according to the invention in claim 8 of the amended subject application is "a data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, said data interpolation method comprising detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; selecting a filter size according to a result of detection of the degree of flatness; and computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected"; and

A control program according to the invention in claim 9 of the amended subject application is "a control program for allowing a computer to execute a data interpolation method for an image reading apparatus having image reading means for reading an image on an original for each pixel and arranged to compensate for pixel data corresponding to a target pixel through interpolation with interpolation data, the method comprising a step of detecting the degree of

flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel; a step of selecting a filter size according to a result of detection of the degree of flatness; and a step of computing the interpolation data by performing a filtering operation on the plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel according to the filter size selected".

(3) Regarding the Reason for Refusal

"Said degree-of-correlation detecting means" in claim 7 of the original subject application is amended in the amendment to "said degree-of-flatness detecting means". The degree-of-flatness detecting means is, as is clear from the amended claim 1, means "for detecting the degree of flatness of a plurality of pixel data situated in the vicinity of the target pixel", and we believe that the unclearness indicated by the Examiner is thereby eliminated.

(4) As has been described above, the amended subject invention does not constitute the reason for refusal indicated by the Examiner and complies with the requirements of Patent Law Section 36(4) and 36(6). We therefore respectfully request that the subject application be promptly granted a patent.

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【整理番号】 253141  
【提出日】 平成17年 6月15日  
【あて先】 特許庁審査官 渡辺 努 殿

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【特許出願人】  
【識別番号】 000001007  
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【電話番号】 03(3580)8464

【発送番号】 139214

【意見の内容】

(1) 「本願に係る発明は、特許法第36条第4項及び第6項に規定する要件を満たしていないため、特許を受けることができない」との趣旨の拒絶理由を検討した結果、本願出願人は別途提出の手續補正書により、明細書を補正致しました。

(2) 補正後の本願発明の特徴

補正後の本願請求項1の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段と、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画素補間手段と、を有する画像読み取り装置において、前記画素補間手段は、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出する平坦度検出手段と、前記平坦度検出手段の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するフィルタサイズ選択手段と、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、前記選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出する補間データ算出手段と、を有することを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項2の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「請求項1の発明において、前記画像読み取り手段は、所定の間隔を空けて一列に配置された複数のイメージセンサからなり、前記注目画素は、隣接するイメージセンサ同士の間に対応する画素であることを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項3の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「請求項1又は2の発明において、前記補間データ算出手段は、フィルタサイズの異なる複数のフィルタを有することを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項4の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「請求項1乃至3のいずれかの発明において、前記フィルタサイズは、前記補間データ算出手段が前記補間データを算出する際に参照する画素数に基づくものであることを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項5の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「請求項1乃至4のいずれかの発明において、前記平坦度検出手段は、前記注目画素の両側それぞれに位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出することを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項6の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「請求項5の発明において、前記平坦度検出手段は、前記注目画素の両側それぞれに位置する複数の画素データの最大値及び最小値を算出し、その最大値と最小値の差が予め定められた閾値以下である場合に平坦度が高いと判定することを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項7の発明に係る画像読み取り装置は、「請求項5の発明において、前記平坦度検出手段は、前記注目画素の両側それぞれ及び両方に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出することを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項8の発明に係る画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法は、「原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間デー



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タにより補間するであって、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出し、その検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択し、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズでフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出することを特徴とする」ものであり、

補正後の本願請求項9の発明に係る制御プログラムは、「原稿画像を画素毎に読み取る画像読み取り手段を有し、注目画素に相当する画素データを補間データにより補間する画像読み取り装置のデータ補間方法をコンピュータにより実行するための制御プログラムであって、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出するステップと、前記平坦度の検出結果に応じてフィルタサイズを選択するステップと、前記注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データに対し、選択されたフィルタサイズでのフィルタ処理を行うことにより前記補間データを算出するステップと、を備えたことを特徴とする」ものである。

(3) 拒絶理由について

今回補正前の本願請求項7に記載されていた「前記相関度検出手段」は、今回の手続補正書により「前記平坦度検出手段」に補正しました。平坦度検出手段は、補正後の請求項1で明らかなように、「注目画素の近傍に位置する複数の画素データの平坦度を検出する」手段であり、審査官殿が指摘されました不明な点は解消されたものと思料致します。

(4) 以上のように、補正後の本願発明は、審査官殿が指摘された拒絶理由が解消されており、特許法第36条第4項及び第6項に規定する要件を満たしています。よって、本特許願につき速やかに特許査定がなされるよう希望する次第であります。

以上